Tales of Medaram

About *Tales of Medaram*

What does it mean to see?
Not merely to look, but to feel the truth beneath appearances.
To witness with wonder, to question with humility.
This book begins not with answers, but with a timeless question—
Why are we here?

Welcome to **Tales of Medaram**, a sacred journey through image and word— crafted with care, devotion, and Through seven years of tireless photographic pursuit, I, Vinod Kumar Peta, have attempted to see— not just with the eye, but with the heart. To witness Medaram not as an event, but as a living spirit. Not as a festival, but as a testament to the unity between humankind and Earth. This coffee table book, titled ***Tales of Medaram***, is the culmination of a long pilgrimage— of sweat, dust, light, shadow, and countless untold stories.It is born from years of standing among the faithful, of listening, observing, and quietly becoming one with the moment. And behind this visual odyssey lies an invisible thread— a journey of thought, of philosophy, of research— questioning the cosmos, questioning ourselves. It is this marriage of image and inquiry that makes ***Tales of Medaram*** not just a book of photographs, but a vessel of memory and meaning.

I have walked with the forest, with the faithful,and with silence. Through rains and dust, light and shadow, I have seen Medaram not just as a festival, but as **a living, breathing cosmos**— where the soul of the forest speaks through its people, where the cry of a tribal mother becomes myth, where the divine feminine rises in the form of **Sammakka**.And I am joined in spirit and thought by **a fellow seeker**, whose deep research and philosophical insight have woven the unseen threads of this book—the stories behind the stories, the questions behind the image.Together, we invite you into a **never-seen-before universe**,
a Gondwanic tapestry where past and present still speak to one another,
where nature is not conquered but revered— **where god is forest, and forest is god.**

This is our tribute— to the sacred land,to the tribal soul, to the invisible histories, to nature as god,and to the light we all carry within. And perhaps, in the end, we must return to the beginning: Why are we here? Not to conquer. Not to own. But to witness.To protect. To remember. "**Tales of Medaram**" is not just my story. It is the story of all who walk the earth with reverence. A mirror of what we are—and what we might still become.

We welcome you to enter this book not just as a reader, but as a **fellow human being**—someone who belongs to this Earth, as much as the trees, the rivers, the wind, and the stars. This is not a story of someone else. It is your story too. Because *Medaram Jathara* does not belong to a place, or a people, but to **all of humanity**.It is not just a tribal ritual—it is a reminder that **we were once one** with nature,with each other,with the silence between heartbeats. This universe—this memory called **Gondwana**—does not divide. It includes. It gathers us all like fallen seeds under the same tree. And **Sammakka**, the mother, the fire, the forest—she does not ask who you are. She only asks—**Are you listening?**

If you've ever felt lost in this world, if you've ever wondered where you come from, or what connects you to the dust, the rain, the stars— then this book is for you.

If you want to know about yourself, you must enter this book.

Foreword

Once in a generation, a book arrives that doesn't just document—it *awakens*. *Tales of Medaram* is not merely a collection of images, but a pilgrimage through time, a deep conversation between land, people, and the divine. It is a question that echoes through forests and flames. It begins with wonder—and ends with even greater wonder.

The journey of this book began not with a camera, but with a question: *Why are we here?* And it dares to answer through silence, through story, through shadow and sun. Over the course of seven years, Vinod Kumar Peta has not only witnessed Medaram—he has dissolved into it. With devotion, he followed the footsteps of generations who walk not toward spectacle, but toward memory. With eyes that see beyond surfaces, he ventured into the universe of Gondwana, where time is not linear and nature is not a backdrop—but the very breath of belief. In between his opening and closing questions, this book speaks—of the cosmos, of arrival, of the human place in a world far older than us. It speaks through trees and dust, through tribal chants and flickering torches, through the strength in women's faces and the rhythm of ancestral rituals. It whispers the truth that *Sammakka is nature, and nature is God*. The forests protect us. The rivers remember us. And Vinod's photographs carry that sacred echo.

Each image is more than light and frame—it is memory. It is time travel. It is a frozen answer wrapped in mystery. One sees not just people but presence, not just rituals but roots. These pages do not flatter; they *feel*. They do not simply show tradition; they *live* it. The culture of Telangana—its invisible threads of belief and beauty—is held here with grace, with fire, and with an almost spiritual precision.What stands before us is more than a book. It is a mirror. A mirror of where we've been, and a map of where we might still go. It reminds us that to understand the divine, we must first understand the Earth beneath our feet. That in honoring Sammakka, we are honoring the soil, the women, the wind. This book stands among the finest international visual testaments to living tradition, indigenous philosophy, and cultural resilience. A rare masterpiece that calls across borders and generations.

You do not merely *read* this book. You absorb it. You remember it. And if you're listening closely— It remembers you too.

J. Ramesh Naidu

A Research Paper — In Search of Sammakka, In Search of Ourselves

When I first arrived in the forests of Medaram, I thought I had come to document a ritual. But the forest had other plans.

It played with my senses — a fog that felt like memory, trees that whispered questions. In the darkness, I would look toward Chilakala Gutta, its silhouette resting like a sleeping deity. I stared until my doubts swallowed me. But each morning, the sunlight returned like a gentle answer, pulling me back from the edge. I stayed. I listened. I lived among the tribals, spoke to the priests, walked through the silence, and danced in the noise. The deeper I went, the more blurred the lines became — between history and myth, goddess and woman, belief and question.

One side says Sammakka is a goddess.
Another says she was a queen — a warrior who resisted the Kakatiyas.
Others call her a daughter of Gondwana.
Some whisper she never existed at all.
So… what should I believe?

Was she divine? Or defiant? A spirit? Or a symbol?

I wrestled with this for months. As a writer, I knew I had to find my perspective — my truth. But what I didn't know was… it would find me instead. One afternoon, on my way back from Medaram, I stopped in the forest — alone. I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, and asked the sky: Who are we? Where did we come from?

And just like that, the forest replied — **not with an answer, but with another question.**

That's when I understood: this journey was never about proving whether Sammakka *existed*. It was about understanding what she *represents*. If you go deep enough — into atoms, into stars — you'll see the same truth: humans are travelers. We come. We stay for a while. We forget. We divide. We destroy. But in the beginning, there were no borders. No caste. No religion. Only the earth. Only nature.

And Sammakka — *she is nature.*

She does not ask for worship. She demands remembrance. She returns every two years to remind us who we were… and who we've become. Vinod Kumar Peta's photographs reflect this realization. When he first showed me his work — seven years of visual pilgrimage — I saw Medaram not as a spectacle, but as a soul. His perspective is unlike anything I've seen. His lens doesn't just capture blood, ash, or jaggery. It captures time. Memory. Emotion.

This project began as a collaboration between image and word. But it turned into something larger. I traveled. I researched. I met Siddha Boia Arun, the priest of Medaram. I spoke to Arun Kumar Mypathi. I learned from the people of Birsamunda Research Centre in Kamaram. I sat with poets, scholars, storytellers, elders — those who remember and those who imagine. Through them, I understood that there is not one Sammakka. There are many. And yet — there is only one truth beneath them all:

Sammakka is nature. Nature is love. And love is the oldest form of resistance. When I finally left Medaram, Siddha Boia Arun looked at me and said, *"This place has a power. If you come once, it calls you again."* He was right.

Medaram is not just a festival.
It is a mirror.
It tells us where we came from.
And gently, fiercely, asks us: where are we going?

So yes, this chapter began with a question — *Is Sammakka real?*
But it ends with another: Are we?

I am Jinka Varun Kumar Naidu. I take full responsibility for every word written in this book — not just as an author, but as a witness, a listener, and a traveler through the soul of Medaram. I bow with gratitude to the forest that embraced me, to the tribal families who opened their homes and hearts, to the priests who shared their ancient wisdom, and to the invisible spirits of Gondwana who walk among us — whispering through leaves, through fire, through silence. This journey was not just about documenting a festival. It was about understanding the pulse of a people, the power of memory, and the sacredness of soil. It was about unlearning what history told me, and relearning what the land wanted me to hear. Because in the end, the story of Sammakka is not just about her. It is about all of us — the forgotten voices, the unheard prayers, the silent tears of the forest, the pride of a people who never needed a temple to find God.

Yours sincerely,

Jinka Varun Kumar Naidu

Rebirth Through the Lens

From the fragile breath of childhood, a quiet dream stirred within me—
not loud or grand, but persistent, like a whisper that refused to fade.
I yearned not for fame or applause,
but for the power to pause time,
to hold light in my hands,
and to eternalize emotion in a single frame.

With just one roll of film—36 fragile chances— I stepped into the chaotic grace of wedding photography. Among bangles, incense, and the golden flares of festivity, I began to see beyond the visible. Love. Longing. Silence. My lens became my language. But the journey did not end there.As time flowed on, so did my desire to explore the deeper terrains of photography— not merely to capture what is seen, but to reflect what is felt.It was here that Fine Art Photography opened its doors, and I walked in like a seeker entering a temple. I studied tirelessly. Practiced endlessly. And in that sacred silence of shadows and highlights, I found my true calling: Pictorial Photography—where a photograph becomes a poem, where light itself becomes an emotion.

In my pursuit of mastery, I devoted myself to refining my visual language. Not for accolades, but for *truth*. Not to showcase, but to seek. Then came the day that transformed everything: January 4, 2016. I walked away from a secure media job, choosing instead the wilderness of uncertainty. Armed with a degree from JNAFAU, graced with titles like EFIAP/B and EFIP, and holding over 400 awards, I began again. From zero. From soul. The call came not from a gallery, but from the earth— from Medaram, my ancestral land. News of the Sammakka Jathara echoed through my spirit. Not as a religious event. But as a philosophical reminder: Nature is God. We are children of Gondwana. We do not own nature. We belong to it. This Jathara is not a festival of a single community. It is a celebration of existence itself. It belongs to everyone—the soil, the stars, the silence, and the seekers.

On February 19, 2016, I stepped into Medaram, armed only with an untouched Canon 5D Mark II, and a heart wide open. Amidst the dust, the cries, the golden twilight— I heard the whispers of rebirth. The scent of the earth, the pull of the sky, and the wisdom in the faces of strangers told me— this was not a documentation. This was a transformation. Seven years have passed since that moment. This book is the result of those seven years of quiet dedication, of listening, of wandering, of surrendering. Each photograph here is a breath I took in Medaram. Each image is a fragment of a conversation between the visible and the invisible, between memory and meaning.

This book is not just my story. It is ours. A shared journey of emotion, of culture, of philosophy. With the generous support and deep research of Jinka Varun,who journeyed with me as a writer and spiritual companion, this project became not just a book—but a *question*.

A question to the universe.
A question to time.
A question to ourselves:

What does it mean to truly see?

I am **Vinod Kumar Peta**, a photographer who believes in the unseen,
in the soul beneath the skin of moments.
And together—with myself as the image-maker and seeker—
I offer you this work,
forged over **seven years**,
as a tribute to **Medaram**,
as captured in this book: ***Tales of Medaram***,
to **nature**,
and to the **light we carry within**.

Yours sincerely,

Peta Vinod Kumar

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Chapter 1: A Journey into the Cosmos and Ourselves

Let me pose a question: Why was this universe created? Who governs the stars? Why are there only nine planets, and why does Earth alone nurture life? Why did the mighty dinosaurs vanish, and how did we, human beings, come into existence? What is the purpose of life? Behind all this there is power or god ??

Science, mythology, and philosophy offer a spectrum of interpretations. Some speak of divine will, others of random chance, and some propose cosmic design. Yet none fully quiet the yearning in the human heart to understand where we come from—and more importantly, where we belong. For me, the origin of existence is not a riddle to be cracked, but a mirror to our inner world. It is less about answers, and more about awareness. Perhaps we are not meant to know everything. Perhaps we are meant to observe, to wonder, and to feel the quiet pull of the universe within us. Everything in nature moves with intent—from the dance of galaxies to the birth of a leaf. And so, I believe we too are born with purpose. We are not the masters of this world—we are travelers, observers, dreamers, and momentary guests in an ancient, breathing cosmos.

Each question we ask leads to another. Every discovery we make unfolds another layer of the unknown. The deeper we look into space, the more we find reflections of ourselves—fragile, seeking, evolving. Our journey began long before history remembered it, in a time when we were not separate from the world around us, but fully entwined with it. Humanity has come far—from fire-lit caves to satellite cities, from hunting grounds to high-speed internet. Yet with every step forward, a part of us has been left behind. We have built empires in the sky, but in doing so, we have uprooted ourselves from the soil.

Today, I believe we are still divided into two kinds of people:
Those who remain connected to the pulse of the earth—sunlight, rivers, winds, and trees—and those who live in grids of concrete and glass, increasingly distant from the rhythms of life. But there is hope in memory. There is guidance in old footsteps. Let us now turn to the first group—the original custodians of the land—tribal communities who still live in sacred harmony with nature. These are not people of the past; they are keepers of ancient futures. Their ways are not primitive, but profoundly evolved. Among them are the Koyttores and the Gondi people, whose roots stretch deeper than most of us dare to imagine. These communities have carried forward a wisdom that is ecological, spiritual, and communal. They sing to the rivers. They speak to the mountains. They offer not domination over nature, but partnership with it. In their eyes, everything has life. And in their stories, everything has meaning.

They have no word for “wilderness”—because for them, the forest is not wild. It is home. To understand the soul of such a worldview, we must go back—
Farther than empires.
Deeper than history.
Beneath even the myths.

We must return to the land itself. Because the story of these people is also the story of the land they belong to. This brings us to **Gondwana**—a name that echoes both in ancient rocks and living languages. It is here that Earth itself holds the memory of the first breath. It is here that tribal feet have walked for millennia. It is here, in the belly of time, that the saga of Medaram begins.

Chapter 2: Gondwana: The Birth of a World Before Time

To truly understand a people, we must go further back than memory—beyond history and deeper than legend. We must listen to the Earth itself.

Long before kings and calendars, before language and lineage, this planet held within it a secret continent. **Gondwana**. A name that stirs something ancient in the bones. It is not merely a term from geology—it is a whisper from the womb of the Earth. Formed over **600 million years ago**, Gondwana was not a country, not an empire, but a supercontinent: a colossal stretch of land that embraced what we now know as **South America**, **Africa**, **Australia**, **Antarctica**, and the **Indian subcontinent**.

Yet the name “Gondwana” was not given by paleontologists or emperors. It comes from the **Gondi people**, indigenous to the forests and hills of **central India**. The land beneath their feet—the very soil they call home—once belonged to this primeval continent. In a poetic convergence of myth, memory, and science, it was their homeland that gave name to one of Earth's most ancient creations. This is not a coincidence. This is cosmic memory. Gondwana was alive. It breathed through volcanoes, sang through rivers, and dreamed through forests. Before man learned to write, the Earth was already writing its story in stone and sediment. Towering mountains had not yet risen, but roots of life were taking hold beneath the surface. Oceans lapped against the edges of vast lands teeming with early life—the first stirrings of movement, of breath, of the divine spark that would, one day, look back and tell this story.

But Gondwana did not last.

Over millions of years, the restless tectonic forces deep within the Earth tore it apart. The continents drifted—like memories forgotten, scattered across time. Among them, the **Indian plate** broke free and began a slow, epic journey northward. It carried with it not just land, but legacy. A forgotten soul wrapped in dust and green, in myth and bone. Then, around **50 million years ago**, the Indian plate collided with the Asian continent with such force that the **Himalayas** were born—those great sky-scraping sentinels that today hold snow, prayer, and silence. But not all of Gondwana was lost to the ocean or swallowed by the mountains. A piece of its ancient heart remained intact.

Central India. Between the **Narmada**, **Godavari**, and **Penna** rivers lies a landscape that still carries the pulse of Gondwana. Dense forests, undulating hills, and ancient stone formations speak in the old language of time. Here lives a community who never forgot how to listen to the Earth: the **Gondi people**, whose presence predates kingdoms and scriptures. While the rest of the world moved toward cities, walls, and machines, the Gondi lived in sacred rhythm with nature. They did not need books to pass down knowledge, for the forest was their scripture and the wind carried their songs. They spoke in a language older than ink—**oral traditions**, **ritual dances**, and **ancestral chants** that echoed like the heartbeat of the land. They saw divinity not in distant heavens, but in every river, tree, and stone.

To walk through a Gondi village is to step into a different timeline. Walls painted with ritual murals, floors swept with care, elders humming tales to children beside sacred groves. Here, time bends. The past is not behind—it is all around. A fallen leaf, a crackling fire, a child's laughter—all are echoes of Gondwana. But this story is not only one of survival—it is one of resistance. As empires rose and borders were drawn, as industrial machines howled into forests, the Gondi people stood their ground. Often displaced, often ignored, yet never defeated. They carried their myths, their language, their wisdom—**not as relics, but as weapons of memory**. Their identity, rooted in Gondwana, became a quiet form of defiance against forgetting.

Today, when scientists study the rocks of central India, they find fossils that date back hundreds of millions of years. But when we listen to the Gondi songs, we hear something even older—**the memory of a time when Earth was one**. Gondwana may be gone, its pieces scattered across oceans and hemispheres, but in the hills of Adilabad, the forests of Chhattisgarh, and the hearts of the Gondi people, it **still lives**.

And so this is where our journey begins.
Not in the noise of modern cities, but in the **stillness of ancient soil**.
Not in textbooks, but in **the breath of trees**, the **drumbeats of the forest**, and the **eyes of elders** who remember stories not written but felt.

To understand the story of Medaram, of deities like Sammakka and Saralamma, of sacred pilgrimages and centuries-old belief systems—we must first understand this land.

The land that remembers.
The land that speaks.
The land is called Gondwana.

Chapter 3: The Sacred Sagas – The Heartbeat of Gondi Culture

Before crowns glittered in palaces,
before swords claimed land in the name of kings,
before ink declared borders that blood would later defend—
there existed a different world.
A sacred rhythm of life.
A world held not by walls, but by **stories**.

In this world, the **Gondi people** did not seek to conquer. They sought to **remember**. And what they remembered was not just their ancestors, but the stars, the stones, the rivers, the gods—and something more ancient than all of them: the **Saga**. A **Saga** was not a surname. It was a **soul-line**, carried not in paper records but in the breath of the elders and the beating of the earth.Each Saga was a sacred thread spun by time itself—a mythos that linked families to gods, gods to the forests, and the forests back to the people. It was a circle, never broken. It was a map not drawn in ink, but etched in the memory of trees and skies.

From these Sagas rose the heartbeat of Gondi society. They were **cosmic clans**, each with their own origin stories, their own celestial guardians, their own taboos and totems. Some traced their descent from the tiger, others from the banyan tree, still others from the thundercloud or the eagle that circles above untouched peaks. These weren't metaphors—they were truths. Lived, felt, and passed on like fire from palm to palm. In a time before scriptures, these oral lineages became **scriptures of breath**. Elders—keepers of these living texts—did not merely recite. They **channeled**. Their voices trembled like wind through bamboo as they told of spirits who shaped mountains, of ancestors who walked with gods, of the balance that must never be broken between man and nature. And in the center of it all stood a towering figure—half legend, half god—**Shri Pahandi Kupar Lingo**. He was not born of any one Saga. He **birthed them all**.

A divine progenitor,**Shri Pahandi Kupar Lingo** is said to have descended from the sacred mountain **Dulha Dev** with the purpose of bringing order to the scattered tribes. In a time of chaos and disunity, he gave structure to spirit. He gathered **seven great sages**, known as the **Satpuris**, and through divine vision, assigned each of them a distinct Saga. From these sages would rise the first spiritual lineages of the Gonds—ancestral codes that governed their way of life. But **Shri Pahandi Kupar Lingo** did more than organize. He **awakened**.He taught the people the sanctity of **the natural world**—that every tree has a spirit, every river a memory, and every human a responsibility to both. He was not a king. He was **a seed-planter of consciousness**, whose legacy is not built of stone monuments, but in the unshaken faith that still flows through the veins of his people.Through Kupar Lingo, the Gonds came to understand that their Sagas were not just spiritual units, but moral compasses.They dictated **what plants could be eaten**, **which animals were sacred**, **who could marry whom**, and **which gods demanded which dances under which moon**.

They ensured balance—between human and spirit, between kin and clan, between the living and the dead.And so, while kingdoms fell and dynasties vanished into dusty footnotes, the Sagas endured. They endured in **the lullabies whispered to children**, in **the tattoos inked on the arms of women**, in **the rhythms of the para dance**, and in **the sacred Mahua gatherings beneath moon-soaked skies**.

🕊️ The 12 Sacred Sagas 🕊️

Each Saga carried the legacy of nature, animal totems, trees, stars, and ancestors. These weren't arbitrary groups—they were sacred echoes of the land's soul:

1. **Yerwen** – Symbolizing the sacred number seven, drawn from the ancestral figures of creation.
2. **Sarwen** – Associated with the six original ancestors of the land.
3. **Siwen** – Bound to the number five, representing balance in elements and clans.
4. **Nalwen** – Traced to four primal ancestors who guarded the four corners of Gondwana.
5. **Sarpe** – A mystical offshoot of Sarwen, often linked with serpentine guardianship.
6. **Koyatur** – Carriers of the tiger's spirit, fierce, noble, and protectors of forests.
7. **Markam** – Guardians of the banyan tree—symbols of wisdom and rooted memory.
8. **Tekam** – Connected to the tamarind, representing healing and strength through struggle.
9. **Uikey** – Peacock bearers, messengers of grace, rain, and song.
10. **Dhurwe** – Embodying the serpent—transformation, fertility, and ancient knowledge.
11. **Atram** – Carriers of the eagle's eye, visionaries and seers of unseen realms.
12. **Pardhan** – The sacred drummers, oral historians, and music-bearers of Gondi myth.

These Sagas were not just social clans but elemental forces—guardians of direction, time, and nature. Kupar Lingo taught the people how to live in balance, how to marry within the sacred structure, how to sing the right songs for rain and harvest. He gave them law without violence, identity without exclusion, and spirituality without hierarchy.He is said to have formed the first council of elders, choosing twelve wise ones, each a living embodiment of one Saga. Through them, he structured the oral traditions, ritual knowledge, and cosmological beliefs of the Gond. His teachings were passed not through script, but through drum beats, chants, and ceremonial dance. His was a living scripture, etched not in paper, but in memory and soil.

The **Yerwen Saga** represented divine harmony, while **Sarwen** taught purification and discipline. **Tekam** were the healers, and **Pardhan** the memory-keepers, the bards who still sing his name in sacred songs. Every tree had a tale, every animal a totem, and every mountain a spirit. This was Kupar Lingo's world—interconnected, sacred, and rooted in cosmic duty. But time, like rivers, flows forward. Invaders came, forests were felled, languages were lost. Yet the Sagas endured. And with them, the soul of Kupar Lingo.

Today, many do not know the names of their great-grandfathers. But among the Gondi, children still grow up knowing the name of their Saga, its mythic origins, its divine protector, and the ancient taboos passed down through generations. The world may call this folklore. But for the Gondi, it is **law**. It is **truth**. It is **the drumbeat of the Earth's first memory**. In the face of erasure, the Saga system stands tall—**not in defiance, but in devotion**. To remember your Saga is to remember that you are not alone, that your story began long before you were born, and that when you die, the story doesn't end. It merely returns to the Earth —waiting for another voice to sing it back to life.

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And perhaps, there is no voice louder, no cry more ancient, than the one that echoes through the forests of **Medaram**.Every two years, lakhs of pilgrims leave behind concrete cities and digital time, walking barefoot through the dust and memory of the land—drawn by a force they can't name but deeply feel. They gather under no temple spire, no royal command. They gather under **trees**, around **shrines of soil and stone**, to honour two divine women—**Sammakka and Saralamma**, mother and daughter, goddesses born of rebellion and blood. They do not come to worship an idol. They come to remember a **sacrifice**. A memory held not in gold, but in grief and pride—etched in the very Sagas that bind their souls. Sammakka, they say, was a tribal queen, a warrior mother who defied imperial cruelty to protect her people. Saralamma, her daughter, followed her into flame and legend. Their spirits, it is believed, were born from **the same ancestral thread that Kupar Lingo once wove**—a divine echo of the Sagas, incarnated in feminine form. At Medaram, **the forest becomes the temple**, and the wind carries old songs. People speak in whispers, tears, and drums. They speak in Saga. They speak in **remembrance**.

And thus, the Sagas live on—not just in stories, but in journeys.
In the long walk to Medaram.
In the shared Mahua.
In the red cloth tied to trees.
In the fire that Sammakka lit—**a fire that still burns in every heart that refuses to forget**.

This is not just mythology.
This is not just a pilgrimage.
This is **Gondwana remembering itself**.

From the Flame to the Forest: Towards Sammakka and Medaram

As generations passed, Pahandi Kupar Lingo's vision did not fade—it evolved. The sacred structure he created became the foundation on which spiritual resistance was born. And then came a time of great unrest. A time when imperial hands tried to seize forest lands, and tribes were forced to choose between submission and survival. In this crucible rose a mother and her daughter—**Sammakka and Saralamma**—warrior priestesses of divine fire. Their stand in **Medaram** became not only a fight against injustice, but the ultimate embodiment of **Gondi spirituality and Saga solidarity**.

The tribes who once learned the laws of harmony from Pahandi Kupar Lingo now found themselves united again—this time in rebellion. Their Sagas were not forgotten; they were the very fuel that lit the forest with resistance. **Medaram Jatara**, now the largest tribal gathering in Asia, is more than a festival. It is the living proof that Kupar Lingo's dream survived. Through Sammakka and Sarakka, his vision transformed into a **spiritual uprising**—a cry of dignity, memory, and the heartbeat of Gondwana.

Chapter 4: The Living Tapestry of Gondwana – Culture, Festivals, and the Spirit of Sammakka

To truly understand Sammakka and Sarakka—not just as deities, but as manifestations of Gondwana's living spirit—we must step back and witness the vast and vibrant world of the Gondi people. Gondwana was not only a geological supercontinent; it is also a cultural supercontinent—a cradle of traditions that have flowed like subterranean rivers through time.

The region of Gondwana, spreading across parts of present-day Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Odisha, is home to one of India's oldest surviving indigenous cultures—the Gondi civilization. With origins that stretch back thousands of years—well before the Mauryan or Gupta Empires—the Gonds have preserved their culture through oral traditions, art, and a deeply spiritual relationship with nature. Their presence is documented in inscriptions dating back to the 10th century CE, and they established their own dynasties, such as the Garha-Mandla and Deogarh kingdoms, between the 14th and 18th centuries.

The Gonds speak in whispers of wind, sing in the murmur of streams, and carry history in drumbeats and footprints. Their memory is not written in stone, but passed down through song, ritual, dance, and fire. Their festivals do not seek spectacle; they seek connection—with earth, ancestors, stars, and animals. The Phag, Dandari, Hariyali, and Madai festivals honor sowing and harvest, the return of ancestors, and seasonal balance. Every ritual is a step in the sacred cycle of nature. There are no divisions between the divine and the daily; the kitchen fire is as sacred as a shrine. One of the most powerful symbols of Gondi spirituality is the festival of Madai—a moving celebration that travels from village to village, accompanied by deities and devotees, singing the memory of gods and martyrs. The community does not wait for gods to arrive; they carry them with them. In this moving forest of belief, Sammakka and Sarakka rise like blazing torches.

Sammakka's story unfolds in the 13th century, a time when the tribal regions faced increasing pressure from expanding kingdoms and exploitative rulers. Born into the forest, Sammakka was discovered glowing with a divine aura near the Chilakalagutta hill by a tribal chief. Raised as one of their own, she grew into a powerful woman, both revered and feared for her strength and wisdom. When the Kakatiya kingdom imposed harsh taxes and tried to force submission from the forest tribes, Sammakka refused. She became a symbol of resistance, not through violence alone, but through fierce defiance and unshakable dignity. Her daughter Sarakka, and her sons, too, took up arms beside her. What began as a local rebellion became a mythic war, etched into collective memory.

But why is Sammakka especially remembered, beyond others? Because she disappeared into the forest, leaving behind no body, no grave—only belief. Her disappearance is seen not as death, but transcendence. The red ochre casket, the turmeric offerings, the gathering of millions in Medaram—these are not just rituals. They are echoes of that moment when a woman became eternal.The tale of Sammakka does not emerge in isolation—it grows from this rich soil. She is not just a goddess who appeared in Medaram. She is the culmination of Gondwana's spirit, the fire that burns in every tribal woman, the silent revolt behind every ritual drum. Her resistance was not born of sudden rage—it was born of ancient rhythm.

When the forest was threatened, it was Gondwana that stood. And when the Gond spirit needed a voice, it spoke through Sammakka. Her divine role is not limited to one region. In every Gondi village, there are echoes of her strength. She is worshipped not only as a savior but as a sister, a daughter, a mother—one of their own who rose for them all. From Kupar Lingo's creation of the Sagas to the vibrant social unity of the Gonds, from the earth-honoring rituals to the festivals under moonlight, Sammakka's presence is the beating heart. She carries the legacy of Kupar Lingo's vision and embodies the strength of Gondwana's cultural resistance. Thus, by the time we arrive at Medaram, we are not entering a place—we are entering a story. A story that began with Gondwana, was sculpted by sages and spirits, and crowned by the blood and courage of two women. It is not just a pilgrimage. It is a return.

The soil remembers. The rivers sing. The people gather.

Medaram is not the end of the story—it is the heartbeat.

Chapter 5: Echoes of Gondwana: *The Legendary Stories*

Beneath the vast skies of Gondwana, where the red soil breathes legends and the forest whispers forgotten truths, echoes a chant that time could never silence—**"ఓ రేలా రేలా రేరేలా!"** This powerful refrain, passed down through generations, sings of King Beramboyina and the fearless forest-born warrior Sammakka. It tells not only the story of a daughter of nature but also the legendary Gond empire and the proud lineage she came from. This is not merely a song—it is memory, resistance, and reverence woven into melody. Even today, as the Jathara begins, this chant rises like the beating heart of Medaram, carrying the soul of a people who never forgot.

ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे ला! ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे लो! ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे ला!

अष्टादश दिशां आदि-शक्ति! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।

पूर्वदिशि मुक्तालम्बा! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
पश्चिमदिशि पोतुराजुः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
दक्षिणदिशि मैसम्मा! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
उत्तरदिशि मारेम्मा! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।

ईशान्यदिशि शिवशक्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
आग्नेयदिशि अग्निशक्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
नैऋत्यदिशि धर्मशक्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
वायव्यदिशि वातशक्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।

दक्षिणदेशे बेरम्बोयिनः, परन्देवी! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
उत्तरदेशे कातुरायः, कातम्बोयिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
पूर्वदेशे साम्बशिवः, तूळुमुत्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
पश्चिमदेशे जलचन्द्रः, महादेवी! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।

आकाशदिशि आदि-शक्तिः! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
भूमिदिशि भूदेवी! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।

अष्टादश दिशां आदि-शक्ति! तव चरणयोः शरणं प्रपद्ये।
ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे ला! ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे लो! ओ रे ला रे ला रे रे ला!

To begin the story of Sammakka, we must first turn our ears to the winds of Gondwana — the ancient land of forests, rivers, and tribal memory. Here, among the hills and mahua trees, our Gondi ancestors sang songs not just to remember, but to survive. These weren't stories found in books or written on stone — they were *breathed* into being by drummers, dancers, and grandmothers sitting by the fire, speaking in rhythms older than kingdoms.

It was here, in the sacred rhythm of Gondi breath and drum, that the **Pagadi** — the tribal flag — first rose. More than a cloth, it was a symbol: of resistance, of identity, of nature's truth. Long before Sammakka's name echoed through forests, tribal life followed the wisdom of the earth. Men went out to hunt; some returned, some didn't. Communities faced disease, confusion in lineage, and disarray. Amidst this uncertainty, It was then that **King Beramboina**, a wise ruler, stepped in to restore order. He divided the tribe into **Gottu Gotrams**, a kind of social structure, and assigned a number to each one. He declared that no one should marry within the same gottu-gotram number — this was his way of creating identity, lineage, and protection among the tribes. Beramboina had six sons and six daughters, and among them were two daughters — **Deva Chandramma (Chandam Boiralu)** and **Deva Kanakamma (Kanakam Boiralu)**.

One day, while walking in the forest, the two sisters encountered a young prince named **Raibandani**. He was striking and charismatic, and with just a glance and a few words, both sisters fell in love. Some say he shot magical love arrows; others say his presence alone could bend hearts. When Raibandani approached King Beramboina seeking permission to marry both sisters, the king hesitated — but he eventually agreed, moved by his daughters' wishes. He gave Raibandani the **5th gottu number** and a territory to rule. Raibandani ruled wisely, but the absence of children haunted his palace. His two wives were unable to conceive, and the king grew sorrowful. The sisters visited their parental home and sought the guidance of their mother, **Varan Devi**, who advised them to perform a grand **puja** to **Shiva and Parvati**. They returned to their kingdom with renewed hope.

Some time later, King Raibandani and his first wife, Chandam Boiralu, went hunting in the forest. As they rested by the riverbank, they heard the soft cry of a child. Hidden in a **bamboo cradle**, the infant was surrounded by wild animals — tigers, elephants — standing still, as if guarding her. As Raibandani stepped forward, the animals slowly walked away, as if recognizing the child's destiny. Chandam Boiralu picked up the girl. Both she and the king were moved. They felt as if this child had chosen them. They named her **Sammakka**, and she grew up as a princess, raised alongside **Nagulamma**, the daughter later born to the second queen, Kanakam Boiralu.

From a young age, Sammakka was unlike any other. Though born into royalty, she never sought privilege. She healed the sick with her knowledge of plants, prepared her own herbal medicines, and studied the natural world around her. The tribe believed she had special powers. Her ability to **read the signs of nature and predict events** made her a guide, a protector — almost a prophet — among her people. When it was time for marriage, King Raibandani proposed **Pagididda Raju** as a suitable groom for Sammakka. But tribal tradition did not allow the bride to see the groom before marriage. So, Sammakka's sister **Nagulamma** went in her place to meet Pagididda Raju. But Nagulamma herself was charmed by him. When she returned, she lied, saying the man was fat, had large ears, and dark skin — that he wouldn't suit Sammakka.

Sammakka, trusting her sister, sent a **bird with a message** to Pagididda Raju, saying she would not marry him. But King Raibandani had already promised the marriage to Pagididda Raju's family. He was torn between keeping his word and his daughter's will. It was then that Nagulamma stepped forward and offered to marry Pagididda Raju in Sammakka's place — to preserve the family's honour. Sammakka, though disappointed, chose to stay away from the wedding. Yet, at the last minute, something in her stirred — perhaps love, perhaps duty — and she decided to attend. When she saw **Pagididda Raju in person**, she was shocked: tall, handsome, and his skin shining like the sun.

Two feelings struck her: **love**, and **betrayal**. She rushed to the mandapam and **stopped the wedding**, confronting her sister. The argument escalated into a wild fight, with the sisters throwing anything they could find. In the chaos, Sammakka hurled an object that hit **Pagididda Raju's eye**, blinding it. Pagididda Raju, seeing the passion of both sisters, decided to marry them both. Nagulamma became the first wife, Sammakka the second. But the jealousy between the two never faded. Sammakka, tired of the conflict, left with her daughter **Saralamma** and went to her father's palace. Even there, she found no peace. Eventually, she travelled to her grandfather, **King Beramboina**, who saw her strength and declared her the **heir to the dynasty**. He gave her a **silver staff**, a symbol of power, allowing her to rule over any part of the kingdom.

Time passed. Sammakka became a **spiritual leader** — not just a princess, but a symbol of wisdom and defiance. Her daughter Saralamma too was revered. Decades later, as tribal migrations occurred, **tribes from Chhattisgarh** carried the belongings of Sammakka — silver ornaments, symbols of power — with them. They finally reached **Medaram** and placed her items at **Chilakalagutta**. Here, they planted her memory in the soil. And every two years, on the **Magha Suddha Pournami**, thousands of tribals from across the land return — walking barefoot, carrying bamboo sticks, singing her name. The **Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara** is not a pilgrimage of gods — it is a gathering of people, of blood and memory, of rebellion and renewal. No temple, no idol. Only the forest, the flag, and the fire inside every tribal soul.

And so it is said — Sammakka did not return to heaven. She returned to the forest. She is the rustle in the leaves, the whisper in the wind. She is not a myth; she is memory. She is not gone — she is nature. To speak of Sammakka is to speak not of a woman, but of a force — ancient, untamed, eternal. Born not from the womb, but from the heart of the forest, cradled by tigers, guarded by elephants, and chosen by the earth. She did not walk through life — she walked through fire, and made it her companion.

Some say she was a queen, others a saint. She was a healer, a mother, a daughter of the Gonds. But there are those who remember another tale — that Sammakka rose like a phoenix when the mighty Kakatiya empire sought to crush her people. She led her tribe with courage, not weapons, standing between the forest and the army, like a mountain defends the sky. Blood may have stained the rivers, but Sammakka did not fall. She disappeared, yes. But only to become everything — the tree, the wind, the whisper in the fire.

She has no temple, no idol, for Sammakka is not a god locked in stone. She is the rebellion that breathes, the memory that walks. Her Jatara is not a ritual; it is resurrection. Every two years, she returns — barefoot, singing, unbroken. Her divinity does not descend from heaven; it rises from the soil, from the heart of the earth, from the roots of her people. Historians may argue, skeptics may call it legend, but ask the forest, ask the hills of Medaram, ask the wind that carries her name. And they will tell you:

Sammakka did not die.
She transformed.
In the wind, she lives.
In the soil, she rises.
In every heartbeat, she is remembered.
Sammakka is not the past,
She is the eternal force
that refuses to be forgotten.

Chapter 6: The Divine Resonance: A Sacred 35-Days Journey Through Medaram Jathara

As we journey through the corridors of time and the legends of Sammakka, we now find ourselves in the present — where the stories of old have transformed into living symbols, where legends have ascended into the realm of gods and goddesses, embraced by people from all corners of the earth.

The Sammakka Saralamma Jathara is not merely an event; it is a living pulse that beats once every two years, reverberating through the dense forests of Medaram and deep within the hearts of those who still hold the ancient rhythms of the earth in their blood. This Jathara is not just a festival; it is a revival of the old spirit, a celebration of the indomitable will of a people who refuse to be forgotten. Spanning five sacred weeks — a span of thirty-five days — the Jathara is a sacred unfolding, where time itself seems to pause in reverence. It is an intricate tapestry of quiet rituals, forest offerings, songs, and ceremonies that honor not only goddesses but the deep wellspring of memory, resistance, and the unbreakable bond to the land. Each week of the Jathara carries its own meaning, its own rhythm — like the steady heartbeat of a people united in devotion, in remembrance, in love.

In the present, Sammakka is no longer a figure lost to history. She is a goddess, adored and revered. Yet, her true power is not merely in the worship — it is in the way she lives in the hearts of her people, a force that transcends ritual, a spirit that lingers in the very air of Medaram. The Jathara is a reminder that legends never truly die. They evolve, they endure, and they continue to inspire. As the sacred days unfold, the pulse of Sammakka's story — ancient and alive — resounds across time, connecting the past and the present in a seamless thread. This is no mere festival. It is the living embodiment of a legend, breathing, growing, unyielding. And it is in this spirit that Sammakka's legacy carries forward, timeless and unbroken.

First week of Medaram Jathara - The Awakening of the Forest

In the heart of January, when the winter still hangs gently over the forest, the people of the land begin their sacred preparation for Sammakka Saralamma Jathara — a celebration not just of faith, but of memory, resistance, and deep-rooted connection to the earth. The first week of the five-week ritual is quiet but powerful. It begins with the early morning bath of the appointed priests and community leaders — the Jalakam, Vadde, Dumpam Vadde, Talapati, Boyudu Patti, and Doli bearers. On a Wednesday, before the world stirs awake, they cleanse their bodies in the sacred waters, preparing themselves for the responsibility that lies ahead. Carrying the ancient sound of the dolichappula — their traditional percussion instrument — they walk towards Sammakka Saralamma Gudi, their footsteps echoing through the sleeping forest.

Their journey takes them deep into the jungle, to the sacred Vippa tree — Madhuca longifolia — where the first offering is made. A chicken is sacrificed in a ritual called Vippasara Arabosi, and its blood is poured into the red earth. This act, far from violent, is seen as a sacred dialogue with the goddess — a reaffirmation of the tribal people's eternal bond with their land and their protector. The forest responds with silence, with breath, with a stillness that feels holy. After this offering, the group gathers what the goddess requires for the journey ahead: kopiri grass for the roofs of temples, fresh jungle grass, beets, turmeric roots, wildflowers, and firewood — all growing naturally in the red soil, untouched by human interference. Each item is selected with care, with reverence, as if the forest itself is giving her blessings.

Meanwhile, the villages around Medaram stir with activity. People begin to gather offerings — coconuts, turmeric (pasupu), vermilion (kumkuma), saffron, clay lamps called Adhara deepalu, new stools, bells, candlesticks, conch shells, and small tomb-shaped markers known as samadhulu. Every item must be new — untainted, fresh, and sacred. This week is not just a preparation of objects, but of minds and bodies too. Fasting from dawn to dusk becomes a quiet prayer, a commitment. With empty stomachs and full hearts, the people believe that they can receive the presence of the goddess more completely. By nightfall, the first week's work is done — not with fanfare, but with sincerity. The land is awake again, the forest listens. The grass is cut, the Vippa tree is fed, the temples await their goddesses. The people of the forest remember. The goddess is not yet here, but her footsteps are close. And in that anticipation, there is both silence and song.

Of course. Here's a more **dramatic, poetic, and impactful** version of the **Second Week** — written in a single flowing letter-style paragraph, rich in cultural resonance and spiritual weight, while remaining rooted in the tradition and your field notes:

Second week — The Breath of Purity

As the second Wednesday dawns, an ancient rhythm pulses through the forests of Medaram and Kannepalli. It is the **Festival of Purification** — a sacred moment when time bends, and earth prepares to host the divine. Before the sun touches the land, by the stillness of 3 AM, the **chief priests** — the **Vaddelu**, **Dumpavaddelu**, **Jalakam**, **Talapathi**, and others — awaken with reverence. They cleanse their bodies, sweep their homes, wear fresh, untainted clothes, and step barefoot into ritual. The **Saralamma priests** begin their journey from **Kannepalli**, and the **Sammakka priests** from **Medaram**, each carrying the weight of centuries on their shoulders. The grass brought from the forest in the first week — cut from sacred land with ritual music and fasting — is now raised to cover the shrines, sealing them in nature's silence. The **women** of the villages enter the temples like river water — washing floors with **red soil**, decorating thresholds with **muggu (rangoli)**, smearing **kumkuma (vermilion)**, and adorning every corner with wild forest flowers. Lamps filled with **vippa oil** (*Madhuca longifolia*) are lit in **pramidas**, releasing smoke that speaks to the ancestors. Meanwhile, the **Kannepalli priest's** journey toward **Medaram Gaddelu**, where all priests gather at the home of the head priest. There, in a moment of solemn joy, they collect the **Bandari Kattelu (saffron-threaded bangles)** — symbols of devotion and divine strength. These are cleaned, sewn, and tied with quiet grace. The air swells with the rhythm of drums as the procession moves towards the sacred Gadde. Fasting continues from dawn to nightfall — no grain is touched, no thirst quenched — because this is not a day of the body, but of the soul. With each incense offering, with each step of the **hunting procession**, the spirit of Sammakka begins to stir. The forest watches. The ancestors listen. The goddess prepares.

The Third Week of Jathara – A Sacred Ritual

As the sacred rhythm of Medaram's Jathara unfolds, the third week brings with it a deep sense of devotion and ceremony. The *Mandya Melige* festival priests (vaddelu), the esteemed spiritual guides of the village, begin their journey with reverence. They first walk towards *Gaddelu* (a sacred area near the village), where the light of *deepalu* (oil lamps) is offered, the flickering flames bathed in the oil of *vippa tree* (Madhuca longifolia). These sacred lamps illuminate the path, while the priests present food prepared specifically for the goddess—an offering crafted with the utmost care and love.

Their pilgrimage then leads them to the temple of *Muthyalamma* (a local goddess). Here, in a ritual that dates back centuries, they gently apply turmeric to the sacred *Bodrai* (a divine idol), a revered symbol of the goddess's presence. With the help of *Bandarayee* (a priestess), they adorn the idol with *bottulu* (traditional ornaments)—symbols of purity and divine favor. As the priests journey through the village, a magical transformation takes place. All the roads are meticulously lined with twigs, while pillars rise on both sides, crowned by arches—each one a testament to the devotion of the villagers. These arches, or *thoranam* (decorative arches), are not just decorative; they are powerful symbols of protection and prosperity. The priests place branches of *Bureka Manda* (a sacred tree) and *Thuniki* (a local plant) on either side of the road, forming strong pillars that guide the way. With delicate hands, they weave the *nulaka thread* (a sacred thread), crafting arches that are adorned with the fruits of the earth: bottle gourd, fiery red chilies, cashew nuts, and the purifying presence of neem (Azadirachta indica).

The sacred procession demands that no one enters the village during the two hours of this elaborate work. The air hums with a sense of sacredness, as the very earth seems to hold its breath in anticipation. Once the pooja (ritual worship) ceremony is complete, the main priest pours cold porridge and incense onto the altar, performing this ritual to ensure the safety of the devotees and the goddess alike. It is said that this act guards against any misfortune that may befall those traveling to Medaram, protecting both the visitors and the goddess's sacred presence.

With the blessings of the goddess, the priests continue their journey, now headed towards the temple of *Medaram*, where a grand procession awaits—an ancient tradition of animal hunting that carries with it the weight of countless generations.

The Fourth Week of Jathara – A Sacred Procession and Rituals

The fourth week of the Jathara is one of the most significant and sacred phases of the festival, marked by profound devotion and powerful rituals. This momentous day falls on a Wednesday, when the village of Medaram is flooded with spiritual fervor. On this day, the procession begins with the arrival of the deities: *Saralamma* (a goddess), *Pagididraju* (a god), *Govindaraju* (a god), and *Velpula* (a sacred figure), each making their way through the bustling streets of Medaram. The air thickens with anticipation as the deities are brought from far-off lands, signaling the beginning of a sacred and transformative journey.

From this point onward, the priests (vaddelu) enter a state of intense devotion. Their commitment to the rituals is unwavering. They begin fasting, purging their bodies and minds to become vessels of divine energy. No longer do they sleep on comfortable beds; they choose the ground, embracing the humility of the earth beneath them. They discard their slippers, walking barefoot as a sign of their dedication and connection to the divine. This is a time of deep spiritual discipline, where each step they take is a testament to their devotion.

Before the first rays of sunlight touch the earth, the priests gather at the house of the main priest. There, on traditional mats, they sit in reverence. The first act is sacred: they apply *kukuma* (vermillion powder) to their foreheads, a mark of purification and readiness to serve. Then, they tie the *Kakanalu* (a sacred pooja thread) around their wrists, a symbol of their vows to the goddess and the village.

As the day unfolds, they travel to *Kannepalli* village, where an offering is made at the *Saralamma temple*. In the evening, the spiritual procession takes on a majestic form. The priests—along with *Dhupam Vadde* (a priest of incense), *Jalakam Vadde* (a water priest), and *Talapati Dora* (the village chief)—move together, playing traditional instruments like the *Dhol* (drum). With the rhythms of their music resonating through the village, they make their way to the *Saralamma temple*.

When the goddess is brought from *Kannepalli*, the women of the village gather in reverence. They pour water over the devotees, praying fervently for the goddess's blessings. A deep trance overtakes many of the women as they pray for the goddess's divine grace. It is a spectacle that words can hardly capture—a raw, unearthly energy fills the air. Among them, transgender devotees perform wild and untamed dances, their movements a striking reflection of their deep connection with the goddess. The scene is both stunning and surreal—a true visual manifestation of devotion.

As the procession continues, the pujas (rituals) are performed near the *Chalamayya Temple* before the goddess is placed on the sacred *Gaddha* (platform). When Saralamma nears the *Gaddha*, the priests perform a special ritual of rotation. They circle the goddess three times—first from left to right, then from right to left—each rotation a prayer, a plea, and a connection to the divine. After this, they carefully place Saralamma upon the *Gaddha*, her divine presence now firmly anchored at the heart of Medaram. The priests then conduct a powerful pooja and, as a final offering, tie a new *saree* around the goddess, symbolizing her renewed strength and grace.

Meanwhile, from the *Eturunagaram mandal*, the deity *Govindaraju* is brought, accompanied by *Pagididraja* from *Penugonda* village in the *Kottagudem mandal*. As they enter the sacred precincts of Medaram, another pooja is performed, welcoming these gods with deep reverence. They too are placed on the *Gaddha*, and a special ritual follows—honoring them with offerings of incense and prayers.

As night falls, the priests—led by *Vadde* and *Talapati*—gather once again. Their destination is *Palarayee Gutta*, near *Padigapuram*, where they offer a special pooja to the forest deity *Vanamand*. There, in the heart of the woods, incense is burned, and an animal is sacrificed in reverence, completing another layer of the ritual. Before the dawn of Thursday, and as the first light begins to break, the sacred musical instruments—*Dhol*, *Kottu*, and others—are carefully placed near the *Gaddha*, preparing the ground for another day of devotion and ritual.

Thursday – The Sacred Journey of Sammakka Goddess

On Thursday, the long-awaited arrival of the revered *Sammakka* goddess begins with an ancient ritual that stretches deep into the heart of the Jathara. As dawn breaks, the worship begins in the *Chalapayya Temple*, where prayers are offered, and the air is filled with reverence. But it is in the evening that the true essence of the Jathara comes to life.

Led by the devoted priests—*Vadde* (priest), *Jalakam Vadde* (water priest), *Dhupam Vadde* (incense priest), and *Talapati Dora* (village chief)—the procession sets out for *Chilakala Gutta* with the thunderous sound of traditional drums beating in unison. *Chilakala Gutta* is no ordinary hill; it is the sacred abode of *Sammakka*, where the goddess has resided for ages, untouched and untamed.

There is a deep belief among the people that this hill is a realm reserved only for those connected to the *Sammakka* family. It is said that the path to the goddess's dwelling is hidden from the outside world, and only when the festival begins does the route become visible to the chosen few. On any other day, this sacred ground remains inaccessible to all, except for those with divine permission. The journey to bring *Sammakka* from *Chilakala Gutta* to the *Gadde* (sacred platform) is nothing short of miraculous, a process that takes at least seven hours, covering a distance of just two kilometers. Yet, the spiritual fervor of the people makes the journey seem both timeless and eternal.

Millions of devotees, from all walks of life, gather at the entrance of *Chilakala Gutta*, each carrying goats and hens for sacrifice, offerings to honor the goddess. Among them, members of the *Sidda Boya* family hold a special place in this journey. It is said that only they know the hidden route through the forest, and as they enter a trance-like state, the goddess herself reveals the path forward. The priests, too, enter this sacred trance, performing the pooja with deep devotion. They tie red cloths to their heads, believing the color will attract the powerful energy of *Shakti* (goddess power).

As they ascend the hill, traditional music fills the air, and the atmosphere becomes charged with divine energy. The ritual is intense, filled with raw energy. The entire hill seems to tremble as the goddess is brought down, accompanied by the sound of gunfire—an ancient tradition marking her departure. The landscape is alive with the sound of drums, *dhols*, and other instruments as the procession descends. The air is thick with reverence, and the ground is heavy with the weight of centuries-old beliefs.

As *Sammakka* makes her way from the hill, the skies often crack with thunder, a powerful visual reminder of her arrival. The sight is overwhelming—devotees, many in a state of trance, perform wild dances, their movements both dangerous and mesmerizing. The powerful rhythms of the drums, combined with the frenetic energy of the dancers, create a scene unlike any other. Transgender devotees wield large, sharp knives, performing dances that send a shockwave through the crowd. It is a dangerous and powerful spectacle, one that overwhelms the senses. Even the most composed individuals are swept away by the raw energy of the event.

As the procession nears the entrance of the village, the *Chalapayya Temple* becomes the site of another ritual. The sacrifice of a cow marks the culmination of the evening's rituals, a symbol of reverence and devotion to the goddess. In days long past, before India's independence, it is said that human sacrifices were offered to *Sammakka*, a testament to the deep and sometimes unsettling devotion of the people.

When *Sammakka* finally reaches the *Gadde* at the heart of Medaram, a profound moment unfolds. The goddess is placed upon the sacred platform, and at that very instant, the full moon rises, its silvery light cascading down upon the goddess. The scene is otherworldly, as the moonlight bathes the goddess in a divine glow. It is a moment that transcends time—a feeling that is both powerful and serene.

The crowd, numbering in the crores, stands in silence, waiting to witness the divine presence. The atmosphere is thick with devotion, anticipation, and awe. That night, as the rituals continue, the priests do not sleep or eat. Their discipline is unwavering, for they believe that if any part of the process goes wrong, the goddess's power, *Shakti*, may take lives. Every action, every gesture is performed with the utmost purity and respect.

Friday – The Sacred Offering to Sammakka Goddess

Friday marks one of the most significant days of the Jathara, a day when the devotion of the people reaches its peak. It is on this day that devotees are granted the rare and sacred opportunity to see *Sammakka* goddess in her divine form and offer their most cherished possessions—gold, *bellam* (jaggery), and other offerings—in an act of deep reverence. The energy is thick with devotion, as the crowd swells in anticipation of this sacred moment.

On this day, the priests continue their unwavering discipline. They neither eat nor sleep, remaining in a state of constant prayer and devotion. The air is filled with the rhythmic beats of traditional instruments played by the *Dolli* people, whose voices rise in songs of praise. The music echoes through the hills and valleys, adding to the divine energy that permeates the air. This day is also deeply symbolic of the gathering of tribals from across India. It is said that every two years, the *Medaram Jathara* brings together tribes from far and wide, uniting them in a common purpose—to honor *Sammakka* goddess. This sacred occasion falls on the full moon, a time when the light of the moon shines down on the earth, casting an ethereal glow over the land. In ancient times, when there were no streetlights to guide them, people would walk for days, often traveling through treacherous terrain, to meet their relatives at the Jathara. The full moon illuminated their path, a celestial guide to their reunion.

In the early days, the Jathara was a gathering of tribals who would bring their crops from the harvest season in January. With money in hand and produce ready, they would come to *Medaram* to offer their wealth to the goddess in gratitude. It was not just a religious act; it was a celebration of their success, their connection to the land, and their shared bond with the goddess. They would offer crops, money, and even animals in sacrifice, symbolizing their devotion and respect for *Sammakka*. And after the offerings, they would partake in *Eepu Sra*—a traditional local alcoholic drink—celebrating their faith and unity with friends and family.

As the years passed, the Jathara began to attract not just tribals, but people from all walks of life. The significance of *Medaram* Jathara grew, and its magnetic pull drew people from distant places. What began as a simple tribal gathering blossomed into a grand, sacred festival—a testament to the enduring faith of the people and the goddess who watches over them. It became a place where devotion, culture, and tradition converged in a moment of spiritual unity.

Saturday – The Sacred Secretive Rituals

Saturday holds a mystique all its own, shrouded in secrecy and reverence. As the evening falls, the sacred rituals of *Medaram* Jathara take on a deeper, almost mystical tone. The air is thick with devotion as worship is offered near the *Gadde*—the sacred altar of *Sammakka* goddess. It is a time for final offerings to be made to the gods and goddesses, and as tradition dictates, the most powerful of sacrifices are performed. Along with prayers, animal sacrifices are offered, symbolizing the eternal bond between the earth and the divine.

The pooja is held with the utmost respect on *Sammakka Gadde*, the heart of the Jathara, where the goddess's spirit is said to reside. However, this day is different. In a quietly powerful ritual, only a select few priests are entrusted with the sacred task of carrying the *Sammakka* goddess back to *Chilakala Gutta*—her original abode on the hill. It is believed that this journey, taken in absolute secrecy, is essential to maintaining the sanctity and power of the ritual. The goddess, in her divine form, is taken back to the hill by the priests in a procession known only to them. The route is hidden from the eyes of the people, for it is said that if others were to witness this sacred journey, they would be consumed by an intense trance, unable to move or speak until the ritual is complete.

At the same time, *Saralamma* goddess, too, embarks on a parallel journey. She is carried away from *Kannepalli Village*, where her worship was performed, back to her hilltop sanctuary. The same ritualistic secrecy surrounds this procession, keeping the people at bay, as the spiritual power of these divine beings is too great for the uninitiated to bear.

The same respect and caution are extended to the gods *Pagididdaraju* and *Govindaraju*. After their pooja, they too are carried to their respective temples nestled in the hills, their path hidden from the public eye. The silence surrounding these movements is almost sacred in itself; it is believed that if the people were to witness the procession, they would be so overtaken by the divine presence that they would fall into a trance, rendering them unable to allow the gods and goddesses to complete their sacred journey.

This is the essence of *Medaram Jathara*—a celebration of faith wrapped in mystery, where the sacred is kept hidden from the eyes of the world to protect the power of the ritual. The secrecy ensures that the divine can move freely, undisturbed by mortal curiosity, and the power of the goddess and gods remains unbroken.

Fifth Week – Thiruvaram: The Final Promise of Devotion

The fifth week of the *Medaram Jathara* is known as **Thiruvaram**, a time of profound reflection and sacred closure. It falls on the Wednesday of this week, when the entire festival reaches its final, yet powerful, crescendo. This day is unique in its spiritual significance, as it marks the moment when the priests of the four villages—each devoted to their respective gods—come together in their individual sanctuaries to offer their heartfelt gratitude.

On this day, no one leaves the villages. The entire community is steeped in reverence and prayer. The *Sammakka* priests in *Medaram*, the *Saralamma* priests in *Kannepalli Village*, and the *Bayakkapeta* priests all perform special poojas, giving thanks to their gods and goddesses for the successful and grand celebration of the *Jathara*. This ritual is not merely one of gratitude but also a reaffirmation of the vows they took years ago.

As they stand in their sacred spaces, they renew their promises to continue the celebration, to ensure that two years from now, the divine event will unfold once again. It is a vow of eternal devotion, a promise that the spirit of the Jathara will live on in every heart, every prayer, and every sacrifice. The air is thick with sacred chants, as the priests, one by one, express their profound gratitude for the strength and blessings bestowed upon them by the deities.

In the quiet moments of reflection, a powerful and symbolic act takes place. All the traditional instruments that have been used throughout the *Jathara*—the drums, the flutes, the bells, the conch shells—are carefully collected, wrapped in sacred cloths, and hidden away. These instruments are not just objects of sound; they are the vessels through which the divine has communicated with the people. To hide them away signifies the end of the sacred cycle for this year. It is an offering of humility and respect, a recognition that the spirit of the Jathara is now beyond the realm of the material world.

As the sun sets on this sacred day, the priests pray fervently for the well-being of everyone. Their prayers extend beyond the boundaries of the village, across India, and into the hearts of all who are touched by the power of the goddess. They wish for peace, prosperity, and happiness for the entire nation. Their hopes are simple yet profound: that every soul finds joy, that every heart is filled with love, and that the divine blessings of *Sammakka* and *Saralamma* continue to guide them in the years to come.

On Sunday – The Final Picnic and Blessing

As the last echoes of the *Medaram Jathara* fade into memory, the following Sunday dawns with a serene yet sacred tradition—the villagers and priests embark on a final pilgrimage into the heart of the forest. This is not just a mere outing; it is a profound moment of closure, a final ritual of thanksgiving and protection for the sacred goddess *Sammakka*.

With joy and reverence in their hearts, the people of Medaram—priests, devotees, and villagers alike—make their way into the lush embrace of the surrounding forest. The trees stand tall and silent, witnesses to centuries of devotion, as the community ventures into the wilderness with offerings and prayers.

This forest, believed to be the domain of *Sammakka*, is where the goddess herself once roamed, her divine presence ever-watchful over the land. It is here that the connection between the deity and the earth is the strongest, and on this sacred Sunday, the villagers perform special poojas to invoke the blessings of the forest god.

The forest comes alive with the sounds of sacred chants, the rustle of leaves beneath bare feet, and the rhythmic beat of drums. The priests offer their prayers to the unseen guardians of the woods, asking for the continued protection of *Sammakka* and for the harmony between the goddess and the natural world. They seek blessings for the forest, the animals, and the land that sustains them.

As they walk deeper into the woods, the villagers and priests hold the spirit of the *Jathara* close, a final, gentle farewell to the sacred rites that have defined their lives. The laughter of children, the solemnity of prayers, and the hum of traditional songs fill the air, as the community celebrates one last time in the presence of the divine.

After completing their pooja, the day is spent in joy and camaraderie, a picnic of togetherness, bonding, and reverence. As they share meals, laughter, and stories, they also know that the cycle of the *Jathara* has come to an end, and the goddess will now rest, until the next grand celebration two years later.

With hearts full of gratitude, the people return to their village, knowing that the goddess's blessings will continue to guide them through the coming days. This is the final blessing of the *Jathara*, a promise that, even as the ritual ends, the spirit of *Sammakka* remains eternal.

Chapter 7: When the Forest Becomes a Goddess

You may have heard of cathedrals built in marble, of rituals carved in Sanskrit, and temples that rise toward the skies. But what if I told you — the most powerful shrine in this land has no walls, no crown, and no door? Just red earth, sacred smoke, golden jaggery, and the beating hearts of a million believers.

That temple is Medaram. And once every two years, the forest itself becomes a goddess.

The River That Remembers

They say she bled into it — Sammakka.
Not metaphor. Not poetry. Blood. Real, red, and burning with rage.
Jampanavagu, the quiet stream, turns holy during the Jathara.
Old women bottle its water like Ganga. Young men dive like newborns.
You don't just bathe. You surrender.
The mud sticks. The scent lingers. It feels like being rewritten.

Bellam and Bangles – Offerings That Speak

No one comes empty-handed to Medaram.
What they carry isn't wealth — it's memory.
Rusty bangles. A gold coin sewn into a blouse. A child's name whispered into a fist of jaggery. Each offering is a conversation with the divine — raw, trembling, and unfiltered.
The jaggery is not sweet. It is sacred.
The gold isn't jewelry. It's longing, melted down.

When the Drums Begin to Speak

The first beat of the dappu doesn't come from the stage. It comes from under your ribs.
Painted faces. Bloodied blades. Eyes rolled back into trance.
Men, women, transgenders — all possessed. All burning.
You won't understand their language. But you will feel it.
Because they're not dancing. They're channeling. What happens here isn't a show.
It's a possession. A surrender. A dialogue between the dust and the divine.

The Descent – Where the Invisible Becomes Real

High above, on Chilakala Gutta, something ancient sleeps.
And once every two years, she wakes.
No one sees how. No camera captures it. No priest will tell you.
Only the descendants of the goddess walk the path. They know it not by maps, but by blood.
And when they bring her down — not in palanquins, but in energy — the Gaddha shudders.
People scream. Wind changes direction. Even birds go silent. You will know: she has arrived.

The Role of Transgender Devotees

Among the millions who walk to Medaram, there is one group that stands out with pride and power — the transgender community. Dressed in bright sarees, faces painted with bold devotion, they come from villages and cities across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and beyond.

But they don't come just as devotees. They come as daughters of Sammakka.

In our villages, many believe that Sammakka — the fierce goddess of the forest — doesn't see caste, gender, or status. She only sees truth. And in that truth, the transgender community has always found space, respect, and voice.

Many of them believe Sammakka accepts them as they are — people who walk between worlds, like the goddess herself once did: a mother, a warrior, a leader, a mystery.

Of Sacrifice and Survival

Yes, there is blood.
Goats. Hens. Sometimes more.
Don't call it violence. Call it a pact.
You give life to be granted life.
Every drop is barter — illness for health, drought for rain, emptiness for children.

This is not sanitized devotion. This is faith with a blade.

The Guardians and the Map of Power

Chilakala Gutta watches.
Kannepalli sends her daughter.
Chalapayya stands guard.
Gussadi dancers whisper in ash and feathers.
And in between them all, the forest pulses like a living map of memory.

Every tree here remembers. Every path knows pain.
This is not tourism. This is time-travel into the soul of a people.

You Will Return

You may leave. You may wash your feet. You may forget the names.
But one night, in the middle of a city,
you will hear a drum.
You will smell dust and incense in a place that has no reason to carry it.
And something in you — old, primal, and unexplainable — will rise.
And you will return.Not because Medaram is calling.
But because you are already part of her.

Chapter 8: Sammakka Belongs to Everyone - The Mini Jatharas

या न पथेन आगता **(Yā na pathena āgatā)**
या न पथेन आगता, न च नाम्ना न च किरीटिना।
वनज्वलनसमा या, मारुतरूपिणी शान्तया॥

न सा शिलामयी, न च दिवः प्रार्थिता।
स्मृतिस्थिता सा, सत्ये यत्र उत्पद्यते॥

नास्ति तस्याः सिंहासनं, न च मूर्तिः स्थिरा।
भूमिरेव तस्याः देव्याः, श्वास एव स्तुतिर्भवेत्॥

याच्यते चेत् न वदति,
शृणोति तु यः — सः सर्वं ताम् एव स्पृशति॥

Medaram is not the only place where Sammakka walks. She is felt in the hush of dry leaves under barefoot devotion. In the mist that clings to forest mornings. In the smell of burning neem and the slow rising smoke that wraps around old trees like memory. Medaram may be the drumbeat—but her echo begins far before it. And it lingers long after the drums fall silent. She does not wait for processions to begin. She stirs quietly, days before, in places most maps overlook.

In villages where wells are cleaned with reverence, where a single flower placed on the stone carries generations of belief, where silence holds more weight than any sermon. Bayyakkapeta, Kannepalli, Poonugondla, Kondai—these are not just names. They are veins through which her story flows. Not loudly. Not for the world. But for those who have never needed proof to believe.They don't call these "mini" Jatharas. That word is too small. These are awakenings. Whispers before the storm. They are the kindling before the fire roars in Medaram.

Here, the daughter's journey begins—not with noise, but with a sacred ache. Saralamma is carried not as an idol, but as legacy. Every step from Kannepalli is a reunion—between mother and child, land and memory.And then there are those villages where no one announces her arrival. But she is there. In the food cooked with devotion. In the songs sung under breath while sweeping the yard. In the tears shed quietly for reasons even the weeper doesn't understand. Because this isn't religion. It's remembrance.

Far away in Keslapur, a different god is worshipped. A serpent deity. A different language. A different shape of faith. And yet—something feels the same. The forest listens. The drums speak in a tongue older than words. And the people know: we may be different, but the soul we offer to the earth is one.Sammakka does not ask for temples. She does not wait for permission. She appears where she is remembered. And she is remembered everywhere. She belongs to no one. And because of that—she belongs to everyone.And when the time comes, when the dust rises and the voices grow louder and the hills of Medaram awaken once more, she returns. But not from the heavens. From us.Because some goddesses are not born to rule. They are born to rise.She moves, and wherever she moves — a Jathara blooms.

Chapter 9: Where the Forest Remembers - *Medaram as a Meeting Ground of the Gondwana Soul*

In the heart of Telangana, where trees speak in ancient tongues and rivers murmur stories older than kings, lies a sacred ground where history, myth, and blood entwine — **Medaram**. It is not just a location. It is not just a ritual. It is a *pulse*. A place where the Gondwana soul, scattered across centuries and forests, gathers to remember who it truly is.

Long before modern maps had names for this land, long before borders turned forests into districts and tribes into demographics, there was only **the Earth** — old and patient. Gondwanaland — the mother continent — once stretched her body from Africa to India, breathing life into the people who lived close to her veins: the **Adivasis**. Even after millennia of fragmentation, their bond with the soil never severed. And Medaram stands as one of those rarest places where this umbilical cord is still intact.

Once every two years, this quiet patch of green becomes the loudest prayer in the forest. Lakhs, even crores, of feet drum the ground like a tribal heartbeat, coming from Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra, and Telangana. They come not in luxury, not in leisure — but in longing. They come because **Medaram is the only place where their inner drum still finds rhythm**.

But why here? Why Medaram?

It is perhaps the most *accessible spiritual sanctuary* for Adivasis across India. Not fenced by concrete temples or priced by urban piety. Not diluted by digital tourism. Medaram is still earthy. Still raw. Still real. After the formation of Telangana, the Jathara was officially recognized and celebrated as a state festival — but the truth is, for the people, it has always been more than a festival. It is **identity made visible**. A collective memory being reactivated under the full moon.

And it's not just the rituals that make Medaram magnetic — it's the forest herself. Even if you come as an outsider, as a first-time visitor, something in you changes. The smell of the wet red earth, the power in the silence of the hills, the trance-dance of the priests, the electricity in the air before Sammakka descends — these are not things you forget. They cling to your skin like turmeric. You will return. **Medaram doesn't allow one-time visitors. She calls you again.** Not out of duty, but love.

As a nature lover, you may first come for the birdsong, the moonlight, the rhythm of river Jampannavagu. But the longer you stay, the more you realize: *this is not just nature, this is culture wrapped in wilderness*. The trees here remember the footsteps of warriors. The river has tasted sacrifice and song. Even the stones here have names.

And perhaps that is what makes Medaram timeless.

It is not a fossil of tribal culture. It is its *fire*.

In a country speeding into high-rises and algorithms, Medaram reminds us to pause. To bow to the forest. To remember that identity is not a profile — it is a ritual. A gathering. A walk through the dust with goats and goddesses. A silent pact between us and the land that feeds us.

Medaram is where the story of Sammakka lives. But it's also where the story of **every forgotten tribe finds a voice** — loud, proud, unfiltered. And in doing so, it doesn't just protect Gondwana culture.

It resurrects it.

Chapter 10: The Question That Still Remains

It began with a question.

Why was this universe created?
Who governs the stars?
Why does Earth alone cradle life, and how did we, of all creatures, come to ask these things?

Through the winding trails of this book, we have not claimed to answer these questions—we have simply *walked beside them.* We entered forests where time moves in spirals, not straight lines. We listened to the songs of rivers and the speech of trees. We looked not into telescopes, but into the eyes of those who still speak the language of the land. From the ancient soils of **Gondwana** to the present moment, there has been a consistent, quiet truth: **Nature is not separate from the divine. Nature *is* the divine.**

The tribes of this land—the Gonds, the Koyas, the Koyttores—never looked up to find gods. They looked *around*. In fire. In water. In wind. In stone. And in doing so, they saw what many of us have forgotten: **We are not rulers of this Earth. We are its children.** We are all descendants of Gondwana—not by blood, but by belonging. And with that belonging comes a sacred responsibility: **to protect the Earth as we would our own mother.** Sammakka Jathara is not a ritual limited to a religion. It is not a festival of one tribe, one caste, one creed. It is a *reminder*—a cry from the forest—that this world belongs to *all* of us.
That the divine does not live behind temple walls, but in every pulse of the planet. It is not a pilgrimage to a goddess—it is a return to balance.

In a world where progress often means destruction, and belief is weaponized into division, the forest still holds a mirror to our beginnings. Among the tribal people, there is no word for “wilderness.” Because to them, the forest is not wild—it is *home*. They do not fear it. They trust it. They do not own it. They serve it. So we must ask ourselves: In our quest for civilization, what have we truly gained—and what have we lost? As we stand in cities made of steel, do we still hear the hum of the Earth beneath us? In chasing stars, have we stopped listening to the soil?

Maybe the universe was never meant to be solved like an equation. Maybe it was meant to be *honored* like a story—whispered across generations, woven into rituals, sung into winds. In Sammakka's silence, there is no command—only an invitation. An invitation to awaken, to observe, to *belong again*. So as this book comes to its final page, let us remember: Our journey did not begin with human history. It began with the breath of trees, the migration of rivers, the rhythm of fire and rain. And it does not end here. We began with a question—"Why were we created?" And now we are left with a deeper one:

"What will we do with the life we've been given?"

संस्कृत श्लोक **(Sanskrit Poem)**

यं भूमिं जलमग्निवायुकनितं यं चन्द्रसूर्यावुभौ ।
यं खं तारकसंकुलं जगदिदं यः पश्यति स्वात्मवत् ।
सर्वं तत्सकलं च यो न जहात्यात्मन्यदृश्यं सदा ।
स मुक्तः स च सत्यदर्शनरतः स ज्ञेय आत्मा सदा ॥

Translation:
He who sees the Earth, water, fire, air;
He who sees the sun and moon, the sky full of stars—
As not separate from his own Self,
He alone is free. He alone sees truly.
He alone knows what it means to be.

Chapter 11: Frames of Faith, Light of the Forest

Photography, for me, is not about capturing what is seen—
but about **revealing what is felt**.
It is a quiet language, spoken between shadow and light.

Each frame I've made in *Tales of Medaram* is not just a visual—
it's a moment of surrender.
A moment where I stood not as an outsider,
but as one among the many.
As a listener.
As a learner.

I never wanted to photograph a festival.
I wanted to photograph a **heartbeat**.
The heartbeat of Sammakka.
Of the forest.
Of those who still carry the memory of truth in their blood.

In this journey, **nature became my first teacher**.
The trees whispered stories older than any archive.
The wind carried songs that no microphone could record.
The mud, the rain, the firelight, the cries of birds, the gathering of clouds—
they were not backgrounds; they were the **voice of the divine itself**.

To walk through Medaram is to walk through a **living forest of memory**.
Every branch, every drop of water, every gust of wind
is part of a sacred language that the modern world has almost forgotten.
And yet, here it survives.
In the faces of the people.
In their rituals.
In the way they treat earth not as a resource,
but as a **mother**.

Through my lens, I tried not to disturb nature,but to let it **enter the frame as it is**—sovereign, wild, nurturing, and sometimes fierce. My camera never asked nature to pose. It waited for her to speak. Some photographs may seem incomplete. But they are full of silence. They are full of **stories not yet told, but waiting to be felt**.For seven years, I followed not a subject,but a question: **Can an image make us remember who we really are?**

In *Tales of Medaram*, I tried to dissolve the line between the photographer and the photographed. Between image and emotion. Between distance and belonging. Every picture here holds my breath. And behind that breath—my truth.This is not just my photography. This is my offering. To **Sammakka**, to **nature**, to the **tribal soul**, and to the light we carry within.

संस्कृत श्लोकः — "मेदरं कथायाः आमन्त्रणम्"
(***Sanskrit Verse — An Invitation into Tales of Medaram***)

ब्रह्माण्डे व्योम्नि तारकागणः,
ग्रहलोकाः परिभ्रमन्ति शांतये।
गोंड्वानस्य मृत्युञ्जयो ध्वनिः,
सम्मक्का जगतः प्रकृतिस्वरूपिणी॥

नद्यः वहन्ति तस्यां कथाः पुरातनाः,
वनानि जपन्ति स्मृतिरेव धैर्यम्।
गगने दीप्यते आदित्यवर्णा,
धरणी धारयति छायाचित्रजीवनम्॥

मानवजीवनं स्वप्नवत् प्रवहति,
प्रकृतेः प्रेम्णा साक्षात्करोति आत्मानम्।
यत्र दृश्यं शब्दं अतीत्य गच्छति,
तत्र छायाचित्रं आत्मकथां शृणोति॥

गोंड्वानं न केवलं भूभागः,
स्मृति, युद्ध, शांति, श्रद्धा च।
सम्मक्का अस्ति नारीशक्तेः स्वरूपा,
वने वसति, हृदि जागरूकते॥

आगच्छत जनाः, विशिष्यं पश्यन्तु,
मेदरंकथा प्रवेशं — चेतसा नयतु।
न केवलं ग्रन्थः, अपि तु यात्रा —
यात्रा आत्मानः, अतीतानां, पृथिव्याः च॥

English Translation (for clarity):

In the cosmos above where stars drift silently, And planets spin for peace,Rises the timeless sound of Gondwana,Where Sammakka lives — the living form of nature. The rivers carry old legends in their flow, The forests whisper courage through memory. The sky blazes with solar gold, The earth holds stories in light and shadows. Human life flows like a dream, It finds itself only in the embrace of nature. Where vision transcends voice, There, photography listens to the soul's story. Gondwana is not just land, It is memory, struggle, devotion, and peace. Sammakka is the face of woman's power, She lives in the forest, awake in the heart. Come, O seekers, behold the sacred, Let your spirit walk into the *Tales of Medaram*. This is not just a book — it is a journey, A journey of the self, of the past, and of the Earth.

THE END